

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

AID-05 PC-01 /064 W

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R 081630Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4951

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 3019

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BR

SUBJECT: MDB ISSUES STATEMENT; CRISIS SEEMS TO BE SUBSIDING

REF: BRASILIA 2817

1. IN ANTICIPATION OF MDB NATIONAL DIRECTORATE MEETING APRIL 7 (REF TEL), LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES WORKED OUT INFORMAL "TRUCE" IN CONGRESS ACCORDING TO WHICH ISSUES INVOLVED IN CURRENT TENSION WOULD NOT BE ADDRESSED EXCEPT IN MOST CAREFUL WAY. IN MEANTIME, VARIOUS MDB COMPONENTS BEGAN JOCKYING FOR POSITION TO INFLUENCE NATURE OF EXPECTED MDB "NOTE TO THE NATION." FORMER PRIME MINISTER TANCREDO NEVES WAS SLECTED TO DO A DRAFT.

2. AS WAS GENERALLY--BUT NOT UNIVERSALLY""EXPECTED, PARTY WAS ABLE TO AGREE ON STATEMENT ISSUED APRIL 7. BEGINNING "ACTS OF FORCE ARE BECOMING A GOVERNMENT ROUTINE." STATEMENT GOES ON TO DECLARE PARTY'S STRENGTH, MATURITY, AND DEDICATION TO DEMOCRACY, AND TO DECRY GOVERNMENT'S REPEATED USE OF ARBITRARY POWERS AND FAILURE TO SOLVE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ("RISE IN THE COST OF LIVING, THE GROWTH OF OUR FOREIGN DEBT, THE INJUSTICE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH," ETC.). STATEMENT PROTESTS THREE RECENT CASSATIONS
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AND CRITICIZES THEM AS ACT OF "VIOLENCE" AFFECTING DEPUTIES

THEMSELVES, MDB, CONGRESS, AND "ALMOST 250 THOUSAND" VOTERS. SCORING "THE RENEWED USE OF ARBITRARINESS, (OF) FLAGRANT DISRESPECT TO THE POPULAR WILL," STATEMENT DECLARES THAT FAILURE OF ECONOMIC POLICY IS JOINED BY "EFFORT TO DISTRAOT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, TO INTIMIDATE THE OPPOSITION...TO ANESTHETIZE, BY REPETITION AND HABIT, THE CIVIC CONSCIENCE OF BRAZILIANS, IN ORDER TO PERPETUATE THE ANTI-DEMOCRATIC REGIME." STATEMENT ALSO CALLS FOR REVOCATION OF IA-5, CRITICIZING IT ON GROUNDS (AMONG OTHERS) THAT IT "SHELTERS POLICE ABSOLUTISM, TRUCULENT, INHUMAN, AND IRRESPONSIBLE."

3. COMMENT: INEVITABLY, STATEMENT DREW PROMPT, SHARP BLASTS FROM ARENA LEADERS, AND GOVERNMENT PARTY IS TO ISSUE FORMAL REBUTTAL APRIL 8. THIS IS BASIC RITUAL, ACCRDIING TO WHICH MDB IS OBLIGED, IN FACE OF ANY SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, TO MAKE FORMAL DECLARATION PRESERVING PARTY PRINCIPLE AND REFLECTING CONSTITUENT SENTIMENT AS PARTY PERCEIVES IT, AND ARENA IS OBLIGED TO SHOW ITS MUSCLE AND DEMONSTRATE ITS VIABILITY AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENT CAPABLE OF RESPONDING ADEQUATELY TO OPPOSITION CHALLENGE. QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER THAT IT NEEDS TO DO ANYTHING ELSE, BUT CONSENSUS IS THAT MDB STATEMENT WILL BE ASSIMILATED. FOR ONE THING, ITS INSTITUTIONAL NATURE MEANS THAT ANY GOVERNMENT REACTION WOULD HAVE TO BE BROAD-GAUGED, THAT IS, CASSATION OF MDB LEADERSHIP, BANNING OF THE PARTY, OF CLOSING OF CONGRESS, ALL MEASURES SEEN AS DISPROPORTIONATE. (CONGRESS WILL IN ANY CASE RECESS FOR HOLY WEEK, PERMITTING FURTHER COOLING OF ATMOSPHERE.) OUR OWN READING OF STATEMENT LEADS TO CONCLUSION THAT MDB LEADERSHIP ACHIEVED ITS PURPOSE OF STAYING SHORT, WITH SOME MARGIN, OF FORCING GOVERNMENT'S HAND. IT DID NOT, HOWEVER, SUCCEED IN SIMULTANEOUSLY GRATIFYING THE HOTTER HEADS WITHIN PARTY RANKS. THERE THUS REMAINS SOME POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER INDIVIDUAL STATEMENTS WHICH COULD BRING TOUGH GOVERNMENT ACTION OF FURTHER WORSEN MDB'S INTERNAL DIVISIONS. OVERALL, HOWEVER, THE CRISIS SEEMS TO BE SUBSIDING. END COMMENT.

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